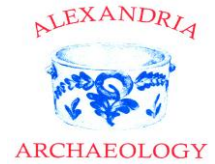




City of Alexandria  
Office of Historic Alexandria  
*Alexandria Legacies*  
**Oral History Program**



**Project Name:** *Alexandria Legacies*

**Title:** *Interview with Ms. Mollie Bass Abraham*

**Date of Interview:** *June 29, 2011*

**Location of Interview:** *Ms. Abraham's home in Alexandria, Virginia*

**Interviewer:** *Molly H. Kerr*

**Transcriber:** *Elaina Lill Uhl*

**Abstract:** Mollie Abraham, born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, came to Alexandria as a young woman and worked with her husband, Meyer. She raised three children here and was active in the schools, her synagogue, the Alexandria Breast Cancer Walk, and the Civic Association. As a Living Legend of Alexandria for 2011, she talks about why she became active in community affairs and how Alexandria has changed over the years.

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*Mollie Abraham June 6, 2011*

*Photo Credit Molly Kerr for Alexandria Archaeology*

### **Introductions**

Molly Kerr:	Today is June 29th, 2011. This is an oral history interview on behalf of Alexandria Living Legends 2011. Being interviewed today is—
Mollie Abraham:	Mollie Abraham. Mollie with an “I-E.”
M.K.:	And the interviewer today is Molly, with a “Y,” Kerr. All right, Ms. Abraham, is your full name—do you have a middle name to insert into your full name?
Mollie Abraham:	Well occasionally they use Bass, Mollie Bass [B-A-S-S] Abraham. That is my maiden name.
M.K.:	Okay. And is there an address [laughs], as I write “address,” is there a mailing address outside of the one to which I originally sent you the letter of introduction that we should have on file for you?
Mollie Abraham:	No. I think that for the time being, this [house on] in Alexandria is good. If there is a change I’ll let you know.
M.K.:	Okay. Thank you. All right, where were you born?
Mollie Abraham:	And I’m going to pronounce it so that you can understand it. BAL-TI-MORE. [“Balmer’], Maryland.
M.K.:	Okay, all right. And if you don’t mind me asking, when?
Mollie Abraham:	1926, June 2nd. And if you do your fingers you’ll see that it is 85.
M.K.:	Uh huh. And outside of Baltimore and Alexandria, where else have you lived?
Mollie Abraham:	That’s it. I have a place in Florida. And I spend some months down

	there now. Although I am still registered to vote in Alexandria. And I also have an Ocean City [Maryland] condo [condominium]. That I bought with two women in [19]74, so I still have that.
<b>Family</b>	
M.K.:	Okay. All right, so when did you move to Alexandria?
Mollie Abraham:	1949. Coincidentally, it happens to be the date that I got married.
M.K.:	Okay. All right. And what is your spouse's name?
Mollie Abraham:	It was Meyer [M-E-Y-E-R].
M.K.:	Okay. And, did you have any children?
Mollie Abraham:	Three. Lynn, Mark [M-A-R-K], Lynn without an "E," and Philip, one "L."
M.K.:	All right. And where are Lynn, Mark, and Philip now?
Mollie Abraham:	The two are here. Lynn and Mark live in Alexandria. And Philip is in West Hartford, Connecticut. In fact, He is working at Lesley College. He is with Bon Appetit; they have a cafeteria contract there. He's a CIA (Culinary Institute of America) grad[uate]. That is why he is there.
M.K.:	[laughing] What?
Mollie Abraham:	Don't laugh.
M.K.:	Oh, I'm allowed to laugh! It's okay. What were your parents' names?
Mollie Abraham:	Mary and Philip
M.K.:	With one "L"?
Mollie Abraham:	With one "L"! Good Going! Is that because your name is Molly that you are so smart?
M.K.:	Ah, exactly! Do you have any siblings?
Mollie Abraham:	I have a brother Harry, another brother Sidney [S-I-D-N-E-Y], and a sister "Reenie"—Irene.
M.K.:	And are they still living?
Mollie Abraham:	Yes. I am the oldest.
M.K.:	Oh, good gracious. Okay. And are they close by? Did they stay in Maryland?
Mollie Abraham:	Harry's in "Balmer." Sid is in Virginia Beach. And Reenie is in Whittier, California. That's close enough—we do see each other!
M.K.:	Okay, did they come for your birthday?

Mollie Abraham:	Um, my brother Sid was here and my brother Harry. But we had just been to California for a bar mitzvah. So Reenie couldn't make it.
<b>Education in Baltimore and Work in Alexandria</b>	
M.K.:	Okay, that makes sense. What brought you and Meyer to Alexandria?
Mollie Abraham:	The fact that his family was already established here. They were in business so it was the place to come because Mey was working in the business.
M.K.:	Okay, and what was the business?
Mollie Abraham:	In fact it was at 1102 King Street. We had the White Star Market. And it was a meat market with fresh vegetables. My father-in-law used to pick up the produce in Manassas. And we also had a slaughter house so we had fresh meat—hogs and beef. We also had a building at the 400 block of King Street for a while so that when we needed to go there to save the property license that they had as a restaurant and wine and beer license. Mey and I shifted over there and were at 406 King Street for a year. This was the beginning, when we had first gotten married, so we moved, but it was always the family enterprise that was there.
M.K.:	Can you tell me a little about your educational background?
Mollie Abraham:	You mean beyond high school?
M.K.:	Uh huh!
Mollie Abraham:	No, that was about it.
M.K.:	Okay. High school was it!
Mollie Abraham:	High school, which I went in "Balmer." I worked for five years before I was married. And before becoming an activist and the things that I choose to do, I used to take courses and became an activist in the things that were of interest to me. And perpetuated some of the things I did by attendance of meetings and furthering that way. I even applied once for a government job! Yes, it came in with the things that I had done, and the education that I had and the extra courses that I had done. Don't ask me know because I lose it a little bit. They started me at a grade nine and this was a great number of years ago so I was pleased with that. But I do read and keep up with the news. And try to educate myself accordingly.
M.K.:	There is nothing wrong with being self-taught [laughs].
Mollie Abraham:	I like public schools. Self-taught is different than home-taught.
M.K.:	Yes, yes. Did your children attend school here in Alexandria?

Mollie Abraham:	Yes, they are all graduates of school. And Lynn and Mark graduated Hammond High School which is in the West End...then we lived here in this house for over forty years. And Philip graduated from T.C. Williams. I haven't figured out if they really graduated him or if they just couldn't wait to get rid of him [laughter]. But in any event, before the remodeling he graduated T.C.
M.K.:	Okay, okay.
Mollie Abraham:	They were all in further education—Lynn and Mark. And Philip couldn't decide whether he wanted to continue his education. But then finally decided that the Culinary Institute of America Hyde Park [New York] was where he really wanted to be. So he was. We were able to send him there.
M.K.:	Do you think that he got into the restaurant business because of what you and your husband were doing? For his career path?
Mollie Abraham:	I would doubt that. Because it was hard work. It continues to be hard work. But he felt that there was much that he could do differently, if in fact, he had the formal education. Even at that point, remember, Philip is 48 years old so there is a considerable difference between the other two kids. There is 9 years difference between the second and Philip. And so it succeeded. I mean, he did do exactly that. Although he worked at the Vienna Inn—which is what we had, the business that we had in Vienna for 40 years! It was he who came up with the new chili recipe and innovative ideas with regards to vegetarian chili which they hadn't had before. Different processes as far as healthy foods were concerned. I remember his doing the oil in the French-fryer every night! Which is a given, among other things that are now requirements by the Health Department. So, yeah, he did a good job. He worked there for 15 years. Before going to Connecticut. Before working for Lesley College he had a country inn there.
M.K.:	Wow! Cool. So you all have been, you mentioned the White Star Market, and the Vienna Inn, do you all own any other business? Proprietors of anything else?
Mollie Abraham:	Well we had the businesses as I said. When we went to 406 King Street it was a restaurant there and in order to save that we did Tom's Garden—I think was the name of it. We were there for a year—Mey brought up the business. That was the time that Cameron Station—a bus stop was near there and it was a working-class place. There were other stores there then that don't exist now. And I can't—you can't imagine now what was there on the 400 block today. Because we've watched two hotel changes in the time I have been here. From the restaurant that we had, to the restaurant that was

	there by the people who bought it, to the Holiday Inn, to the newest restaurant that is there now...and [Monarch] Hotel there. I think that is about it.
M.K.:	Are you still involved with the Vienna Inn?
Mollie Abraham:	We'll, let's say that the reason that I am here talking to you and don't have to work anymore is because we still own the property. That makes the rent very handy to live on. Because my husband was a philanthropist in so many ways but we could never afford to have long-term insurance, or other insurance. In those days nobody did because you were lucky to be able to make ends meet. We didn't move from house to house because we couldn't pay the rent. We moved because we thought—even into this house to which we've been in for forty years—because the houses in Del Ray certainly didn't have basements all of them. Certainly didn't have air conditioning. And Philip had allergies so I moved to the West End and did the first thing—to put an air conditioner in and electronic filter, etc.
<b>Community Activism</b>	
M.K.:	So what would you—what would you say is the—you were talking about activism and being an activist. What were some of the organizations that you were an activist with—or causes—that you are an activist on behalf of?
Mollie Abraham:	<p>It's funny that you asked that. At the very beginning, when we lived in East Alexandria Avenue, we were very close to a synagogue that I still belong to. In fact we're a fifth-generation... Valley Drive., where the canon is on Braddock Road and Russell. That was our synagogue before we moved to Valley Drive and Kenwood Avenue. And so I did my share of sisterhood president and number of—a couple of times. The facilities were small but I had a niece who was living here with her grandparents at the restaurant at 1102 King Street and she belonged to the [unintelligible] girls. They needed a chaperone and I just got in town to Alexandria so I was the likely one to call. Some of the friends that she had then—she lives in Florida now—I still see and talk to. That's a great number of years and it is funny to see them with their grandchildren and some great-great grandchildren. And it was I who started that.</p> <p>So I continued to do that and it was—it's always—to work with the synagogue because I was also working then after working for the restaurant for a year, White Star Market. I was active at other civic things. And as the kids were in school there was always the need to have a mother chaperoning for one thing or another and making some changes. When we were living on Alexandria Avenue the kids</p>

	<p>used to go to Mount Vernon Elementary School. But the kids on the other side of the street went to Maury. So though they played together when they were home they never shared the same school. Then there was a need that we make changes that we make positive changes for everybody—either the one or the other—so that they don't have boundaries across the street. And so I got involved in the PTAs [Parent Teacher Association] and I got involved with the PTA Council at the time, which was a step up so that it could kind of be coordinated.</p> <p>I always worked with the civic associations that were involved in any neighborhood that we lived in. And whatever had to be done, whether it was integration...working with women's groups, because there has always been a need. I'm going back in searching my mind...“Welfare to Work.” Projects that were excellent projects that were started in Alexandria. Unfortunately they had five-year lapses. We always fought it. And did it. And forgot the next step. Because it is still an excellent program—always was. It is the same as that and teenage...even, even, the wagon at the time that I was active wanted to have a needle exchange program. At the time, unfortunately, there were a lot of politics going on about where to put it. It should have been put before we worried about which neighborhood. A lot of things like that between the schools, civic deals, segregation of schools, PTAs, and then the feminist movement. I started the N.O.W. [National Organization of Women] chapter of Alexandria. I use to go to Washington, D.C., and continued in that 'till it was self-sustaining. In fact, Lonnie Rich today still reminds me that he was the only male member of the Alexandria N.O.W., which was started in this rec room downstairs. And we still talk to each other, so how bad can I be?</p>
M.K.:	Well, hey, that's excellent!
Mollie Abraham:	And then I went on to be state coordinator, among other things.
<b>Reasons for Activism</b>	
M.K.:	Okay. That is quite a bit of activism and volunteerism on your part. Why did you get started? What made you feel that you needed to be a participant in the process?
Mollie Abraham:	The interesting part—it is funny that you say that. Because I've always been active in whatever I did. In high school I use to leave at 7:30 in the morning and get home at 6:30 to 7:00 o'clock at night. It was no different then. And I didn't have to stay away from home because I didn't like my parents. I loved my parents! But I was interested in everything that was going on. I can go back to high school and remember that I used to go there early in the morning



because I took rifle practice—22 long rifle. But I am not a gun advocator now, okay! [laughter] But I wanted to learn. I felt that women should do those things. Like there was a civil aeronautics course. Was I ever going to be a pilot? Well, maybe. Who can tell? We had an advisor who taught us. I took the course. Also a woman advisor.

I played basketball. I played volleyball. I played field hockey and I still have bruises to prove it. Those were the sports—remember basketball was a sport that was half court. And so, it automatically works into all the things that I did then...became friendly...I used to officiate basketball. I had a national rating. God, that rating goes back to 1944. I should have retained it because they sure do need some good officials today in women's basketball [Molly laughs].

So I met a bunch of friends along the way these things were happening. I can remember meeting the young woman who worked for the gas and electric company in "Balmer," but she was coaching St. Elizabeth's school and that was just a couple of blocks away from the neighborhood. And I used to officiate there. And she was in awe. She had never talked to anybody that was Jewish. At all! I mean I really recognize that I wasn't different and if I could prove it to her she'd recognize that also. The interesting part was that as we became friends and you could see that back then and I'm talking that was before I was married so we're talking [19]46, [19]47, something like that. There was discrimination then. I gave a speech. We had a speech contest and the integration situation was not too good even in the East "Balmer." And it was a monologue. I was one of two selected. The sad part is that someone else won although the sponsor, one of the women judges, had to come and tell me, one of the Doctors of English there, that I had definitely won but that there would be those that would be critical about what I chose to speak about. And that's why I didn't win but that I should never give up.

Well, it was she among others, so I kept on going. And I've never been sorry. Dorothy and I, the young woman who was a coach at St. Elizabeth's, we went to go crabbing. And her family lived in a far section in the city of "Balmer." In fact, the outskirts—Overlee. There was this sign at Beverly Beach that back in the late [19]40s already: "NO JEWS OR DOGS ALLOWED!" on a banner as we went in. She had been going fishing with her brother and her father for years and going crabbing, she never even seen the sign before! And so those were the things that I recognized even then!

My parents were hard-working parents. Certainly, never discriminatory—to anyone! At any time. So I certainly didn't pick up any bad habits from them. We're talking about hard-working people.

	So I guess it was just one of those things. That I picked up and I continued. I needed to do that. I continued to do it because that is where I am. It's not special. And I'm not.
M.K.:	Yes you are. So you talked about Dorothy, the other coach. Were you parents at all active in your community? In your synagogue? In any of those?
Mollie Abraham:	We didn't belong to a synagogue in "Balmer." My aunts and uncles used to. My father worked for relatives. My mother ended up having to work because her sister and my father's uncle were in business together coincidentally. That is where they met! And married. They married in this country and became naturalized citizens. They never had time to do anything like that. We went to school. They, of course, you know, attended the meetings that they had to attend. We were kind of self-sustained as I became older. If there was a problem with the youngest it was I who would go with Mom. They both were high school—I don't even know if they got out of high school. Dad read a paper all time. Both were born in Poland. My father [was from] Warsaw. My mother in Krakow or something like that. They met here. At the time my father was working for relatives and my mother was working a Stewart's Company in Baltimore as a seamstress. So, that was it. But we knew all the neighbors. I mean, God! I would never have an argument on Thursday with the families that were living there. You see, they were all Italian and that was a good spaghetti night. So I'd hang over the fence until I got invited [Molly laughing]. So I knew my neighborhood! [both laughing] Right near Patterson Park!
<b>Marriage</b>	
M.K.:	Okay, very good. It is interesting. So how did you meet you husband?
Mollie Abraham:	Blind date.
M.K.:	Really?
Mollie Abraham:	Surprised?
M.K.:	Wow!
Mollie Abraham:	Yeah! And he could see! [laughter]. I mean it was really, I mean being as much of an activist and outspoken—I certainly was never painfully outspoken, but I was certainly did speak if I saw an injustice being done. That is how I got in the speech I was in—talking to this young man who was beaten up in Patterson Park. A friend of my husband's was dating a friend of mine who was taking care of his mother who was ill in Baltimore. Mey lived in Alexandria at the time and I lived in Baltimore. Buddy lived in Baltimore, Sue

	<p>lived in Baltimore. And it was through her, the nurse, that I met Mey 'cause Mey was a very close friend of Buddy's. And that was it.</p> <p>And it would take a guy like him, who was certainly bright, had wanted a college education but was very devoted to his family and always the obedient son, would work in the slaughterhouse, would work at the grocery store. That brother of his worked there also; he was a meat-cutter. And it took about a year. He'd commute to Alexandria when we dated. He was also a very sensitive, quiet individual—that was good! Certainly, I have always been outspoken, but the caringness—and he was that all our married life—Mey was a couple of years older. He cared for his folks. Both of us considered them as part of the family. And he considered my parents as part of the family. He was never intimidated by what I did. I was always who I am. And he was in a quiet way very good with that also. And even in the synagogue when we got married, he was secure. It made a good marriage.</p> <p>As we think about it today, it's hard for two people so different to survive. But even when he was at the White Star Market he was there 12 hours a day. 7 days a week. That's how he knew to work. Unfortunately you shouldn't do that anymore. You have to spend time with the kids so that they know—11 and a half hours would be better [laughter].</p>
M.K.:	Exactly!
Mollie Abraham:	Working never hurts.
M.K.:	No, because it also sets a good role model for the children, so—and I suspect that, even though your parents were not, you know, did what they needed to do in terms of raising you. A lot of you and the reason why you are involved in the things you are even still today is because of the ethic that was instilled in you.
Mollie Abraham:	Good people. That was what Mey was. A wonderful person. He was that good. He had certain idiosyncrasies that he wanted in order for the kids to see him, if they wanted extra money they'd have to go to the Vienna Inn to sign a slip and take it out of the register. But they had to leave a slip. But then he got to see them. Right. No, it was good. It was good.
<b>Nomination as Living Legend of Alexandria</b>	
M.K.:	So, to back up a little bit, how do you feel about being nominated as a living legend?
Mollie Abraham:	Thank God I'm living! I mean can you imagine if it were the other way around? Woo! I almost missed it! [laughter] They got around to rethinking, and this age population is disappearing from the city of

	<p>Alexandria—they better hurry up! And sustain themselves so that it can be continued.</p> <p>I'm pleased. There are others who do just as well. Maybe because I spoke louder that they remembered me. It has been like that for the other nominations that I have gotten. Do I deserve them? I'm pleased that people believe that I do! I'm honored that I have been selected. And as I said I'm glad that I am still living to get all the glory.</p>
M.K.:	<p>That's important! But it also, as I mentioned earlier, it lets you know that the efforts that you are making are noticed and that you are a special individual, that needs to be honored. So...</p>
Mollie Abraham:	<p>You see, the time that I told you about working with regard to Welfare to Work and starting the programs that I started. [I] worked with Kerry Donley, [who] at the time was Mayor, [with a] teenage group that we met at the Lee Center. We also had a call to the community that was an excellent idea. It, actually, I think it's understanding that combines the Jewish and the Black population in Washington, D.C., and other areas around so that there is an understanding of what people are like—all people—and those have been of interest of me, and there are others that I am sure that I touched upon and maybe worked less time. But I never said no, as I do now. I don't intend to be there and have much many opinions to say unless it personally involves a community, then I will, because I don't intend to participate anymore, other than do the right thing. You need a sticker, get a decal. You know what I'm saying? I can give a comment but I won't belabor it. Because I don't intend to volunteer because frankly the young people feel that they have a lot to give that what we thought of doesn't count. Or that it is new, that things have changed, I think that it would be they who make the changes and put their money where their mouth is. And I mean that most sincerely.</p>
<b>The Walk to Fight Breast Cancer</b>	
M.K.:	<p>[laughs] Okay. Your nomination indicates that you were involved in the walk to fight breast cancer in Alexandria. What got you started in that program?</p>
Mollie Abraham:	<p>Actually, [unintelligible] were on that committee among others. I remember them. Commission for women was that we got the hospital involved. It had not been done before. I was hoping that we could of gotten as—maybe we could the breast cancer wagon that was coming out of GW [George Washington Hospital in Washington, D.C.] to start to do breast cancer mammograms. As it was. We have a problem and we still have a problem. We continue to have Medicare health problems among other things and now it is</p>

	<p>said that actually there are those who believe that mammograms are necessary. There are those who say now take it at the age of 40 instead of 50 or what have you. There was a need for it. And there were those of us who agreed. And the city manager had to be really responsible because it was she who formed the committee that we talked about it. And then we got it to work.</p> <p>And because there were runs—this was before there were so many that you have now. We were the first walk. It was officially a walk. You want to run, run! You want to walk, walk. You want to run, run—but come! And it worked. Contributions were made by good people. The Holiday Inn was very participating. Cameron Mill, where the swimming pool is, we got bagels from the Panera, the coffee, I think, from Louie Marcus at the Holiday Inn. Among other things. Water from other places. It is a big thing now. And they make money and they are doing exactly what they should. It is aid to women who couldn't otherwise have mammograms. You had to find a depository to put these X-rays afterwards you had to work with the hospital to see some other—it is a continuing thing among other things to be picked up.</p> <p>It is still not enough because everybody should have the right access to , to be able to have the right things that are life threatening taken care of because—</p>
M.K.:	I agree. Do you recall, now, your first nomination was 1994.
Mollie Abraham:	I think that is about right. I'm not sure.
M.K.:	Do you there being any major obstacles to getting to the planning?
Mollie Abraham:	<p>Well we had to get through the planning because when you've got more than three people, it's not, you know, and you have to vote, uh and there is no money. I mean you really have to determine where you are going to get your volunteers, and it was totally new and Ray Owens was one of the first renowned people so to speak We set up a stage we had [unintelligible] a list of the things they have now. It has become very big. It's a constant. You've got to remember that you're in a city and you can't speak for the city. As citizens we have every right to speak...on the committee but there are also fundamental requirements with regard to staff what you can say and what you can't say and you have to cover the city government to make sure that it is in good stead. In fact the sponsors have always been our cancer survivors, of which I am one; also, Patsy Ticer, and there was a third. At the moment I can't think. That is because I am 85. I could remember it at 84 but now that I am 85 it has been a while [laughter].</p>
M.K.:	Darn that birthday!

Mollie Abraham:	<p>Yeah, Darn that birthday! But it was they and we were there and they continue to be there and others that have helped to continue it. And it has become a very big thing and it should be. It is one of the better, with good advertising, etcetera, except that it is harder and harder because of the size that park the cars, public transportation. Requires the city to get involved. And the hospital, it has become so big that they have partnered with us. And that is just as well also. We have a great cancer section in the hospital that if we need it, it may as well be the best. The doctor that was there, at the time, I can remember was chair of the commission and that was in the early [19]90s. When that cancer area of the Alexandria hospital started and we...the machinery that we got in...and we felt very good about the opening and it is still in existence and it's doing well. It's doing better and keeping the hospital here in the West End where it belongs. There was a time that I feared that we'd lose it to Fairfax. And then we'd be in a mess. It is a good hospital and the program is good. It has the machines that is needed and the oncology department is there also.</p>
M.K.:	<p>I spoke to someone who talked about the hospital moving from basically Old Town into the West End at one point, and that was a big change. Because then there were...medical equipment and physicians and everybody helter-skelter at that point because nobody was sure which office was which. It is good that the hospital has managed to pool all of those resources into one place.</p>
Mollie Abraham:	<p>That also became our problem. I had two kids at the old Alexandria—the OLD Alexandria. I'd say the one in Old Town off of Washington Street and Duke—it was still Duke Street. Which doesn't become Little River Turnpike until you get out into Fairfax. But this hospital that was built became a part of a larger group and you have to realize that there are always going to be changes made. You have to have astute people who are going to be working the program and be young enough—and I am not talking about age—to have a vision of what should be done. And not think about today because tomorrow but next year is going to be even more important. That goes for everything.</p>
M.K.:	<p>Yes. What kind of impact did you hope to make on the community with The Walk to Fight Breast Cancer or any of the other activist opportunities that you participated in?</p>
<b>The Civic Association</b>	
Mollie Abraham:	<p>I personally...I just wanted people to understand that the things that we are working on should be worked on because they are worthy issues. Because it didn't take care of a minority group of people but a majority of a minority among others. There isn't anything that I</p>

	<p>worked on that I regret. NOTHING! The only thing I regret is that we didn't follow through enough to see the completion of what should have been done, but there are always extenuating circumstances for that to happen—that doesn't make it right! But it is that way. That's why [laughs] I can't think of a more appropriate time than now to talk about the fact that we have a 6500-people building that was just finished, or in the throes of being finished, before we thought about transportation. But then Potomac Yard was built with no transportation and we are going to have to go through a transfix of everything that was done there so that there can be transportation and a better use of some of the property that is still there. Nothing is forever. But everything is forever, and it has to be done the best way the second time, as opposed to going the third and fourth and the fifth, because there is always tomorrow. Whether we are here and that was the issue with everything that I worked on.</p> <p>Why did I take over Civic Association President? Because at the time that I did—absolutely! Because at the time the person that was doing it was closing it up! Until I explained to him that you can't do it! There is a treasury. You have to continue! So I took it over. I fortunately found people to take it over. But young people don't think...they are so busy with their own, as I say, "problems"—getting married, having children, thinking about the houses that they want to redo because they are too small—God, I don't know. When you take a three-bedroom, bathroom, a bath and a half house after you had less than that. I moved from a three-bedroom, one-bath, with a 12-by-24 living room and a dining room and put in a half-bath off the kitchen/dining room. I thought that that was paradise until I recognized the Florida-size windows. No way are you going to do air-conditioning and a fireplace that never had a—oh, what do you call—a flue, you know the liners that they had. It was just brilliant.</p> <p>So you really couldn't have a fireplace. And so I took over. I did it because it had to be done. We still have a Civic Association because it is they who should speak to the city about what they think is necessary and obviously they couldn't speak fast enough or long enough because of everything that has happened. That proves that everybody should be political enough to know that they are where they live if they don't like it they have to work in a group, you cannot do this as an individual and if you think that you are that good run for an election.</p>
M.K.:	[laughs] And how many people have you told that too?

Mollie Abraham:	<p>Everybody I talk to! You don't believe it?! [laughing] YOU ask people! I ran across a 1975 newspaper at Mount Vernon—boy, I am gonna let you see that—about some of the things about what I said and what I did. [19]75! I didn't say anything any differently.</p> <p>If you were to hear and to see get up and speak at a birthday party and it was really funny. I had a friend who said something like—</p> <p>My son was doing the introduction. He said something about that I always loved the beach and I've always loved the water and that I loved taking the sun in and that is why I am happy I'm in Florida because I can't take the cold anymore. I really can't. The fingers are numb and I love the heated swimming pool and all that kind of good stuff. And the friend said, "But ask her if she can swim!" And so very quickly I said, "But I can walk on water!" [laughing] And that was it. And that is how I feel about almost anything!</p> <p>We have to keep a sense of humor. People don't understand because I speak so loud, I don't need a microphone, but then I've walked the walk to be able to do those things. And I have never regretted anything that I participated in. Would I have done them differently? I don't know if I would have. There is always a possibility. Would I have gone to college? I would have liked to have gone to college. But I don't think that I missed a thing. The kids and I still talk so I figure that that is pretty good.</p>
M.K.:	That's very good.
Mollie Abraham:	And we keep in good touch. We're not as close as—they are all on their own agenda also—that's good! That's good! And the grandchildren, I have seven grandchildren, two and three-quarters great-grandchildren!
M.K.:	Wow!
Mollie Abraham:	Another one on the way in September. I'm really blessed. I've got it! That is what it is all about. And I still have a happy philosophy as far as life is concerned. I love living in Alexandria! And I still have the sticker that says Alexandria and I do not homestead in Florida!
<b>The Value of Communication</b>	
M.K.:	Okay. So with all that, that long list, what achievement in your lifetime are you the most proud of?
Mollie Abraham:	I need to tell you [pause]. I've been a communicator and I tried to teach my kids, my grandchildren, that no matter what happens, whether we agree or disagree, we need to communicate with each other. Because there is nothing like family. Every, everything that you have on the outside is still on the outside of family. You don't



	<p>even have to like the new family members that come, but you need to love them.</p> <p>I think being able to communicate. Not cleverly all of the time, but most of the time! I think that that is the most important. I really do. I preach it all of the time to the kids. And I am very lucky. My grandchildren call me. But they call me because—it is a telephone call. Not that they call me names or something. Other than “Bubby”! But it is so significant, I mean, you know my AOL is—</p> <p>So I think that it is important for everybody to understand that family is extremely important. If I befriend you, you become part of the family the extended family. It doesn’t matter how close, if you need and pick up the phone, I’m always available—but don’t Twitter me! I don’t do that and I don’t do the texting.</p>
M.K.:	I don’t own a cell phone.
Mollie Abraham:	Well, good. I have a cell phone for security. And I’m glad that my kids made me. Because I carry it with me all of the time. And I think that is wise as you get older. If you remember to keep it in a pocket so that if you need it and if you get stuck in an elevator that doesn’t have a phone you can call 911
M.K.:	And it’s charged!
Mollie Abraham:	I have it charged! I do! I do!
<b>Thoughts About Alexandria</b>	
M.K.:	Okay. All right. Now we are going to switch gears and talk specifically about Alexandria for a few minutes. What are some of your earliest memories of Alexandria?
Mollie Abraham:	<p>The lack of overdevelopment. I think that some things have changed, but they haven’t changed that much in theory and philosophy. Old Town is still Old Town. They tend to be a little elite there. I have some friends over there. I never chose to live in Old Town but did live in Del Ray. But I lived in Del Ray before it was fashionable. I lived on East Alexandria, on Custis Avenue. And then East Alexandria Avenue. In fact notoriety on Alexandria Avenue, I had one of The Mamas and the Papas lived with me and finished her last year in school—Mama Cass! Her family lived here. And she stayed on Alexandria Avenue.</p> <p>I think that we sometimes get caught up as we are now with redeveloping Old Town. Trying to make a budget meet. Everybody wants money. We haven’t set an agenda as to what we think are the most important things. And I hope that the Democrats and Republicans learn to talk the politics of the city because it’s [unintelligible] of this country what is going on now. It stresses me</p>

	because we don't talk to each other now. We're too busy being technologically correct and I think that that loses something. We do the best that we can with the population that we have. Everybody thinks that they are paying more than their fair share. [End]
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